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POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

THE STEVEDORES

Frieze of warm bronze that glides with cat-like movements
Over the gang-plank poised and yet awaiting,
The sinewy thudding rhythms of forty shuffling feet
Falling like muffled drum-beats on the stillness:

*Oh, roll the cotton down—
Roll, roll, the cotton down!
From the further side of Jordan,
Oh, roll the cotton down!*

And the river waits,
The river listens,
Chuckling with little banjo-notes that break with a plop
on the stillness.
And by the low dark shed that holds the heavy freights,
Two lonely cypress trees stand up and point with stiffened
fingers
Far southward where a single chimney stands aloof in
the sky.

NIGHT LANDING

After the whistle's roar has bellowed and shuddered,
Shaking the sleeping town and the somnolent river,
The deep-toned floating of the pilot's bell
Suddenly warns the engines.

They pause like heart-beats that abruptly stop:
The shore glides to us, in a wide low curve.

John Gould Fletcher

And then—supreme revelation of the river—
The tackle is loosed, the long gang-plank swings outwards;
And poised at the end of it, half naked beneath the search-
light,
A blue-black negro with gleaming teeth waits for his
chance to leap.

THE SILENCE

There is a silence which I carry about with me always—
A silence perpetual, for it is self-created;
A silence of heat, of water, of unchecked fruitfulness,
Through which each year the heavy harvests bloom, and
burst, and fall.

Deep, matted green silence of my South,
Often, within the push and the scorn of great cities,
I have seen that mile-wide waste of water swaying out
to you,
And on its current glimmering I am going to the sea.

There is a silence I have achieved—I have walked beyond
its threshold.
I know it is without horizons, boundless, fathomless, per-
fect.

And some day maybe, far away,
I shall curl up in it at last and sleep an endless sleep.

John Gould Fletcher